

MEMORIES OF PRESIDENT LINCOLN

WHITMAN

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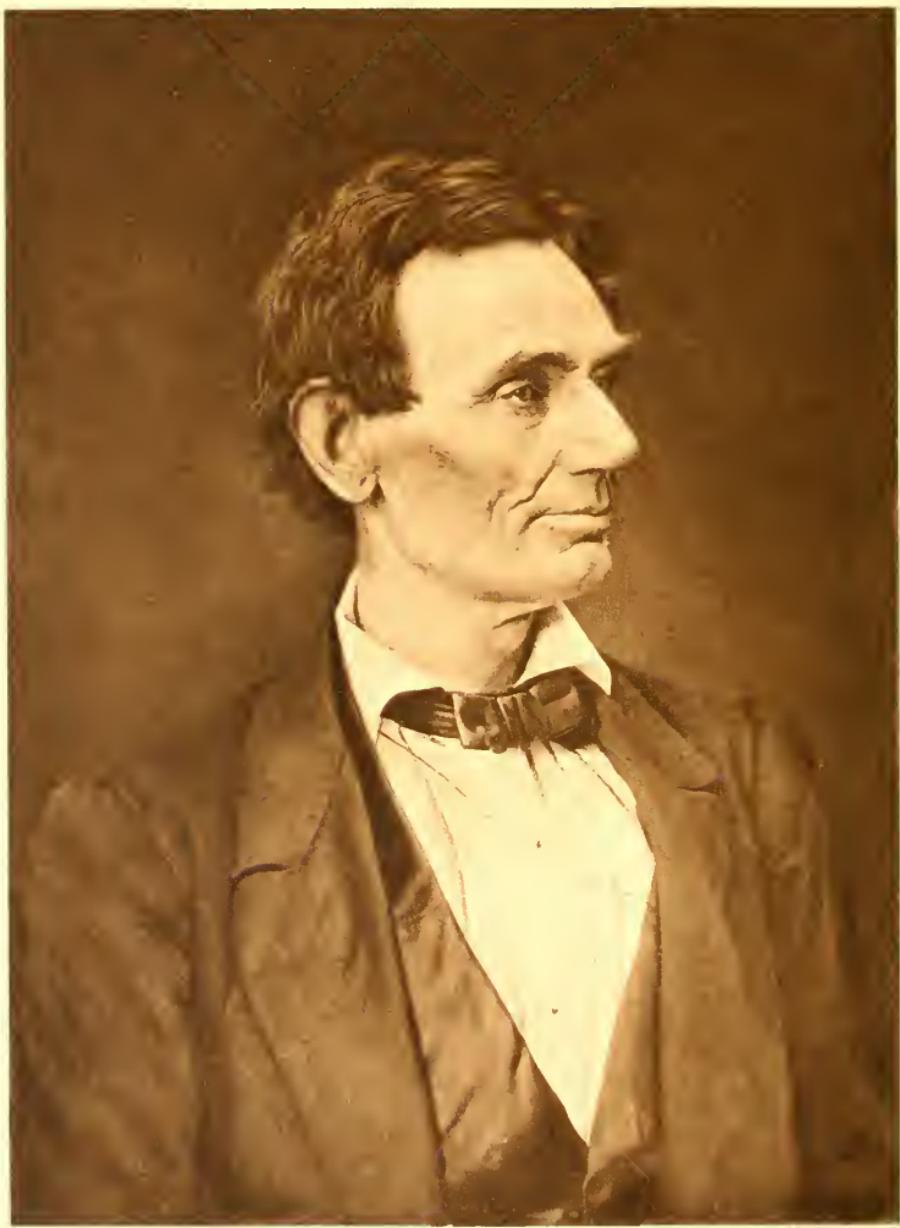


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MEMORIES OF PRESIDENT LINCOLN



Abraham Lincoln



MEMORIES OF PRESIDENT LINCOLN

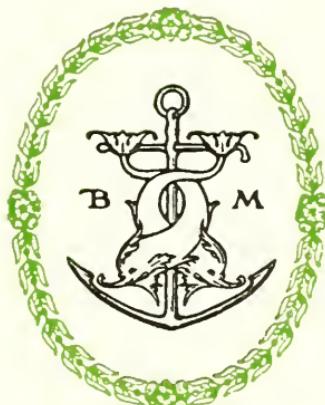
WHEN LILACS LAST IN THE DOORYARD BLOOM'D

O CAPTAIN! MY CAPTAIN

HUSH'D BE THE CAMPS TO-DAY

THIS DUST WAS ONCE THE MAN

BY WALT WHITMAN



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1912

LINCOLN'S GETTYSBURG ADDRESS

FOUR SCORE AND SEVEN YEARS AGO OUR FATHERS BROUGHT FORTH, UPON THIS CONTINENT, A NEW NATION, CONCEIVED IN LIBERTY, AND DEDICATED TO THE PROPOSITION THAT ALL MEN ARE CREATED EQUAL.

NOW WE ARE ENGAGED IN A GREAT CIVIL WAR, TESTING WHETHER THAT NATION, OR ANY NATION SO CONCEIVED, AND SO DEDICATED, CAN LONG ENDURE. WE ARE MET ON A GREAT BATTLE FIELD OF THAT WAR. WE HAVE COME TO DEDICATE A PORTION OF IT, AS A FINAL RESTING PLACE FOR THOSE WHO DIED HERE, THAT THE NATION MIGHT LIVE. THIS WE MAY, IN ALL PROPRIETY DO. BUT, IN A LARGER SENSE, WE CANNOT DEDICATE—WE CANNOT CONSECRATE—WE CANNOT HALLOW, THIS GROUND—THE BRAVE MEN, LIVING AND DEAD, WHO STRUGGLED HERE, HAVE HALLOWED IT, FAR ABOVE OUR POOR POWER TO ADD OR DETRACT. THE WORLD WILL LITTLE NOTE, NOR LONG REMEMBER WHAT WE SAY HERE; WHILE IT CAN NEVER FORGET WHAT THEY *DID* HERE.

IT IS RATHER FOR US, THE LIVING, WE HERE BE DEDICATED TO THE GREAT TASK REMAINING BEFORE US—THAT, FROM THESE HONORED DEAD WE TAKE INCREASED DEVOTION TO THAT CAUSE FOR WHICH THEY HERE, GAVE THE LAST FULL MEASURE OF DEVOTION—THAT WE HERE HIGHLY RESOLVE THESE DEAD SHALL NOT HAVE DIED IN VAIN; THAT THE NATION, SHALL HAVE A NEW BIRTH OF FREEDOM, AND THAT GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE BY THE PEOPLE FOR THE PEOPLE, SHALL NOT PERISH FROM THE EARTH.

NOVEMBER XIXTH, MDCCCLXIII.

NOTHING that unfolding Time discloses diminishes the moral stature of Lincoln. The world grows, when it grows better at all, up to, but never away from him. To our young men who see visions and our old men who dream dreams he beckons forward to effort for a better world. Lincoln is our highest type—greatest above everything else in self-control to ends beyond himself. No one can look upon his portrait without experiencing a stillness, as of the stroke of blended sorrow and beauty in the beholder's inmost heart. Before that gaze of his, so deeply sad, so benign, and yet so firm and so knowing, we are smitten to an involuntary reverence—I had almost said an awe—that can only mean we have apprehended however dimly a mighty, divine soul and caught, however faint and far, its message to our own.

WILLIAM MARION REEDY.

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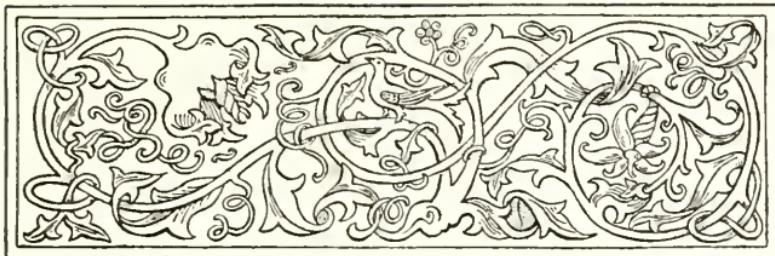
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FOREWORD

The main effect of this poem is of strong, solemn, and varied music; and it involves in its construction a principle after which perhaps the great composers most work,—namely, spiritual auricular analogy. At first it would seem to defy analysis, so raft is it, and so indirect. No reference whatever is made to the mere fact of Lincoln's death; the poet does not even dwell upon its unprovoked atrocity, and only occasionally is the tone that of lamentation; but, with the intuitions of the grand art, which is the most complex when it seems most simple, he seizes upon three beautiful facts of nature, which he weaves into a wreath for the dead President's tomb. The central thought is of death, but around this he curiously twines, first, the early-blooming lilacs which the poet may have plucked the day the dark shadow came; next the song of the hermit thrush, the most sweet and solemn of all our songsters, heard at twilight in the dusky cedars; and with these the evening star, which, as many may remember, night after night in the early part of that eventful spring, hung low in the west with unusual and tender brightness. These are the premises whence he starts his solemn chant.

The attitude, therefore, is not that of being bowed down and weeping hopeless tears, but of singing a commemorative hymn, in which the voices of nature join, and fits that exalted condition of the soul which serious events and the presence of death induce.

JOHN BURROUGHS.



FOREWORD



HITMAN did not subject Lincoln to the literary but to the human motive. Lincoln does not become a literary figure by his touch. Does not become a man in a book. After Whitman is done with him Lincoln still remains Lincoln. No way reduced. No way aggrandized. Only better understood. His background does not become a book. His background remains what it was. Remains life. Generic life. As life is where life finds life at the root. I may let Whitman put in a word for himself. Whitman said to me of Lincoln:

“Lincoln is particularly my man — particularly belongs to me; yes; and by the same token I am Lincoln’s man: I guess I particularly belong to him: we are afloat in the same stream — we are rooted in the same ground.”

To know the Lincoln of Whitman you want to know the Whitman of Whitman. Whitman was literary. But he was not first of all literary. Or last of all literary. First of all he was human. He was not the leaves of a book. He was the bone and flesh of a man. Yes, he was that something or other not bone or flesh which is also of a man — which finally is the man. Simply literary analysis can make little out of Whitman. He does not yield to the scalpel. He is not to

be resurrected from an inkpot. His voice falls in with the prophet voices. He was not unlettered. He knew the alphabet. But he kept all alphabetical arrogance well in hand. The letter was kept in hand. The spirit was left free. You cannot buy a ticket for Athens or Weimar or Paris or London or Boston and reach Whitman. He is never reached in that circle. The literary centers do not lead to him. You have got to travel to him by another route. You go East and find the Buddhistic canticles. You consult the Zoroastrian avatars. And you take the word of Jesus for a great deal. And you may hit Socrates on the way. And you keep on with your journey, touching here and there in European history certain men, certain influences. Going into port now and then. Never going where men compete for literary judgment. Never where men set out to acquit themselves immortally as artists. Keeping forever close to the careless rhythms of original causes. So you go on. And go on. And by and by you arrive at Whitman. Not by way of the university. Not by way of Shakespeare. Not by way of the literary experts and adepts. But by human ways. To try to find Whitman by way of Shakespeare or Moliere would be hopeless. I do not disparage the other routes to other men. I am only describing this route to Whitman. This route, which is the only route. Whitman chants and prays and soars. He is not pretty. He is only beautiful. He is not beautiful with the beauty of beauty. He is beautiful with the beauty of truth. The pen can easily miss Whitman. But the heart reaches him direct. Whitman is therefore the best route to Lincoln. The same process which provides Whitman for you provided Lincoln for Whitman. Whitman said to me again about Lincoln:

“There was no reason why Lincoln should not have been a prophet rather than a politician; he was in fact

a divine prophet-politician; in him for almost the first time prophecy had something to say in politics. I shouldn't wonder but that in another age of the world Lincoln would have been a chosen man to lead in some rebellion against ecclesiastical institutions and religious form and ceremony."

HORACE TRAUBEL.

We are not told that Lincoln ever read *Leaves of Grass* or as much as knew of its existence. Neither are we aware if Whitman ever had intimate personal speech with the liberator of three million souls in bondage. But we do know and rejoice that both men were in the world together, and near in heart and brain together, and that this greatest of all dirges, born of a nation's mourning for her dead, will remain an everlasting masterpiece when

"The tumult of the time disconsolate
To inarticulate murmurs dies away,
While the eternal ages watch and wait."

At the close of an address on Lincoln delivered by Mr. Frederick W. Lehmann at Memorial Hall, Chicago, February 12th, 1908, there is a splendidly apt peroration which we take pleasure in citing in full:

"When the children of Israel had finished the period of their wandering and passed from the land of Moab into the promised land of Canaan, Caleb and Joshua were at the head of the marching columns. But where was the man who had led them out of the bondage of Egypt and had guided them through all the perils of the wilderness?"

*And Moses went up from the plains of Moab unto the mountain of Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, that is over against Jericho. And the Lord shewed him all the land of Gilead, unto Dan, and all Naphtali, and the land of Ephraim, and Manasseh, and all the land of Judah, unto the utmost sea, and the south, and the plain of the valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees, unto Zoar. And the Lord said unto him, This is the land which I sware unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, saying, I will give it unto thy seed: I have caused thee to see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not go over thither. So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord * * * * And the children of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days * * * * And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face.*

When Mr. Lehmann adduced this magnificent parallelism it would seem that he came very near saying the final word concerning Abraham Lincoln.

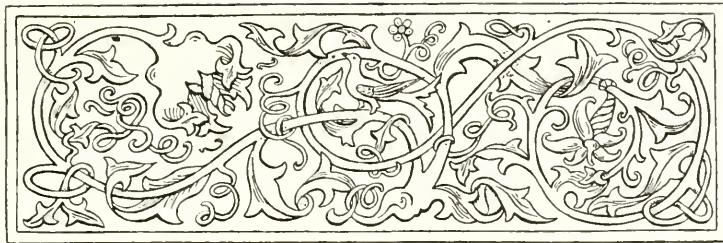
T. B. M.



MEMORIES OF PRESIDENT LINCOLN

Here was a type of the true elder race,
And one of Plutarch's men talked with us face to face.
His was no lonely mountain-peak of mind,
Thrusting to thin air o'er our cloudy bars,
A seamount now, now lost in vapors blind;
Broad prairie rather, genial, level-lined,
Fruitful and friendly for his humankind,
Yet also known to Heaven and friend with all its stars.
I praise him not; it were too late;
And some innate weakness there must be
In him who condescends to victory
Such as the Present gives, and cannot wait,
Safe in himself as in a fate.
So always firmly he:
He knew to bide his time,
And can his fame abide,
Still patient in his simple faith sublime,
Till the wise years decide.
Great captains, with their guns and drums,
Disturb our judgment for the hour,
But at last silence comes:
These all are gone, and, standing like a tower,
Our children shall behold his fame,
The kindly-earnest, brave, foreseeing man.
Sagacious, patient, dreading praise, not blame,
New birth of our new soil, the first American.

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL



Memories of President Lincoln

I

WHEN LILACS LAST IN THE DOORYARD BLOOM'D

I



HEN lilacs last in the dooryard bloom'd,
And the great star early droop'd in the western sky
in the night,
I mourn'd, and yet shall mourn with ever-returning
spring.

Ever-returning spring, trinity sure to me you bring,
Lilac blooming perennial and drooping star in the west,
And thought of him I love.

2

O powerful western fallen star !
O shades of night— O moody, tearful night !
O great star disappear'd— O the black murk that hides the star !
O cruel hands that hold me powerless— O helpless soul of me !
O harsh surrounding cloud that will not free my soul.

3

In the dooryard fronting an old farm-house near the white-wash'd palings,
Stands the lilac-bush tall-growing with heart-shaped leaves of rich green,

With many a pointed blossom rising delicate, with the perfume strong
I love,

With every leaf a miracle—and from this bush in the dooryard,
With delicate-color'd blossoms and heart-shaped leaves of rich green,
A sprig with its flower I break.

4

In the swamp in secluded recesses,
A shy and hidden bird is warbling a song.

Solitary the thrush,
The hermit withdrawn to himself, avoiding the settlements,
Sings by himself a song.

Song of the bleeding throat,
Death's outlet song of life, (for well dear brother I know,
If thou wast not granted to sing thou would'st surely die).

5

Over the breast of the spring, the land, amid cities,
Amid lanes and through old woods, where lately the violets peep'd from
the ground, spotting the gray debris,
Amid the grass in the fields each side of the lanes, passing the endless
grass,
Passing the yellow-spear'd wheat, every grain from its shroud in the dark-
brown fields uprisen,
Passing the apple-tree blows of white and pink in the orchards,
Carrying a corpse to where it shall rest in the grave,
Night and day journeys a coffin.

6

Coffin that passes through lanes and streets,
Through day and night with the great cloud darkening the land,
With the pomp of the inloop'd flags with the cities draped in black,
With the show of the States themselves as of crape-veil'd women standing,
With processions long and winding and the flambeaus of the night,

With the countless torches lit, with the silent sea of faces and the unbared heads,
With the waiting depot, the arriving coffin, and the sombre faces,
With dirges through the night, with the thousand voices rising strong and solemn,
With all the mournful voices of the dirges pour'd around the coffin,
The dim-lit churches and the shuddering organs — where amid these you journey,
With the tolling tolling bells' perpetual clang.
Here, coffin that slowly passes,
I give you my sprig of lilac.

(Nor for you, for one alone,
Blossoms and branches green to coffins all I bring,
For fresh as the morning, thus would I chant a song for you O sane and sacred death.
All over bouquets of roses,
O death, I cover you over with roses and early lilies,
But mostly and now the lilac that blooms the first,
Copious I break, I break the sprigs from the bushes,
With loaded arms I come, pouring for you,
For you and the coffins all of you O death.)

O western orb sailing the heaven,
Now I know what you must have meant as a month since I walk'd,
As I walk'd in silence the transparent shadowy night,
As I saw you had something to tell as you bent to me night after night,
As you droop'd from the sky low down as if to my side, (while the other stars all look'd on,)
As we wander'd together the solemn night, (for something I know not what kept me from sleep,)
As the night advanced, and I saw on the rim of the west how full you were of woe,

As I stood on the rising ground in the breeze in the cool transparent night,
As I watch'd where you pass'd and was lost in the netherward black of
the night,

As my soul in its trouble dissatisfied sank, as where you sad orb,
Concluded, dropt in the night, and was gone.

9

Sing on there in the swamp,
O singer bashful and tender, I hear your notes, I hear your call,
I hear, I come presently, I understand you,
But a moment I linger, for the lustrous star has detain'd me,
The star my departing comrade holds and detains me.

10

O how shall I warble myself for the dead one there I loved?
And how shall I deck my song for the large sweet soul that has gone?
And what shall my perfume be for the grave of him I love?

Sea-winds blown from east and west,
Blown from the Eastern sea and blown from the Western sea, till there
on the prairies meeting,
These and with these and the breath of my chant,
I'll perfume the grave of him I love.

11

O what shall I hang on the chamber walls?
And what shall the pictures be that I hang on the walls,
To adorn the burial-house of him I love?

Pictures of growing spring and farms and homes,
With the Fourth-month eve at sundown, and the gray smoke lucid and
bright,
With floods of the yellow gold of the gorgeous, indolent, sinking sun,
burning, expanding the air,

With the fresh sweet herbage under foot, and the pale green leaves of the trees prolific,
In the distance the flowing glaze, the breast of the river, with a wind-dapple here and there,
With ranging hills on the banks, with many a line against the sky, and shadows,
And the city at hand with dwellings so dense, and stacks of chimneys,
And all the scenes of life and the workshops, and the workmen homeward returning.

12

Lo, body and soul—this land,
My own Manhattan with spires, and the sparkling and hurrying tides, and the ships,
The varied and ample land, the South and the North in the light, Ohio's shores and flashing Missouri,
And ever the far-spreading prairies cover'd with grass and corn.

Lo, the most excellent sun so calm and haughty,
The violet and purple morn with just-felt breezes,
The gentle soft-born measureless light,
The miracle spreading bathing all, the fulfill'd noon,
The coming eve delicious, the welcome night and the stars,
Over my cities shining all, enveloping man and land.

13

Sing on, sing on you gray-brown bird,
Sing from the swamps, the recesses, pour your chant from the bushes,
Limitless out of the dusk, out of the cedars and pines.

Sing on dearest brother, warble your reedy song,
Loud human song, with voice of uttermost woe.

O liquid and free and tender!
O wild and loose to my soul—O wondrous singer!

You only I hear—yet the star holds me, (but will soon depart,)
Yet the lilac with mastering odor holds me.

14

Now while I sat in the day and look'd forth,
In the close of the day with its light and the fields of spring, and the
farmers preparing their crops,
In the large unconscious scenery of my land with its lakes and forests,
In the heavenly aerial beauty, (after the perturb'd winds and the storms,)
Under the arching heavens of the afternoon swift passing, and the voices
of children and women,
The many-moving sea-tides, and I saw the ships how they sail'd,
And the summer approaching with richness, and the fields all busy with
labor,
And the infinite separate houses, how they all went on, each with its
meals and minutia of daily usages,
And the streets how their throbings throb'd, and the cities pent—lo,
then and there,
Falling upon them all and among them all, enveloping me with the rest,
Appear'd the cloud, appear'd the long black trail,
And I knew death, its thought, and the sacred knowledge of death.

Then with the knowledge of death as walking one side of me,
And the thought of death close-walking the other side of me,
And I in the middle as with companions, and as holding the hands of
companions,
I fled forth to the hiding receiving night that talks not,
Down to the shores of the water, the path by the swamp in the dimness,
To the solemn shadowy cedars and ghostly pines so still.

And the singer so shy to the rest receiv'd me,
The gray-brown bird I know receiv'd us comrades three,
And he sang the carol of death, and a verse for him I love.

From deep secluded recesses,
From the fragrant cedars and the ghostly pines so still,
Came the carol of the bird.

And the charm of the carol rapt me,
As I held as if by their hands my comrades in the night,
And the voice of my spirit tallied the song of the bird.

*Come lovely and soothing death,
Undulate round the world, serenely arriving, arriving,
In the day, in the night, to all, to each,
Sooner or later delicate death.*

*Prais'd be the fathomless universe,
For life and joy, and for objects and knowledge curious,
And for love, sweet love—but praise! praise! praise!
For the sure-entwining arms of cool-enfolding death.*

*Dark mother always gliding near with soft feet,
Have none chanted for thee a chant of fullest welcome?
Then I chant it for thee, I glorify thee above all,
I bring thee a song that when thou must indeed come, come unfalteringly.*

*Approach strong deliveress,
When it is so, when thou hast taken them I joyously sing the dead,
Lost in the loving floating ocean of thee,
Laved in the flood of thy bliss O death.*

*From me to thee glad serenades,
Dances for thee I propose saluting thee, adornments and feastings for thee,
And the sights of the open landscape and the high-spread sky are fitting,
And life and the fields, and the huge and thoughtful night.*

*The night in silence under many a star,
The ocean shore and the husky whispering wave whose voice I know,
And the soul turning to thee O vast and well-veil'd death,
And the body gratefully nestling close to thee.*

*Over the tree-tops I float thee a song,
Over the rising and sinking waves, over the myriad fields and the prairies
wide,
Over the dense-pack'd cities all and the teeming wharves and ways,
I float this carol with joy, with joy to thee O death.*

15

To the tally of my soul,
Loud and strong kept up the gray-brown bird,
With pure deliberate notes spreading filling the night.

Loud in the pines and cedars dim,
Clear in the freshness moist and the swamp-perfume,
And I with my comrades there in the night.

While my sight that was bound in my eyes unclosed,
As to long panoramas of visions.

And I saw askant the armies,
I saw as in noiseless dreams hundreds of battle-flags,
Borne through the smoke of the battles and pierc'd with missiles I saw
them,
And carried hither and yon through the smoke, and torn and bloody,
And at last but a few shreds left on the staffs, (and all in silence),
And the staffs all splinter'd and broken.

I saw battle-corpses, myriads of them,
And the white skeletons of young men, I saw them,
I saw the debris and debris of all the slain soldiers of the war,
But I saw they were not as was thought,
They themselves were fully at rest, they suffer'd not,
The living remain'd and suffer'd, the mother suffer'd,
And the wife and the child and the musing comrade suffer'd,
And the armies that remain'd suffer'd.

Passing the visions, passing the night,
Passing, unloosing the hold of my comrades' hands,
Passing the song of the hermit bird and the tallying song of my soul,
Victorious song, death's outlet song, yet varying ever-altering song,
As low and wailing, yet clear the notes, rising and falling, flooding the
night,
Sadly sinking and fainting, as warning and warning, and yet again bursting
with joy,
Covering the earth and filling the spread of the heaven,
As that powerful psalm in the night I heard from recesses,
Passing, I leave thee lilac with heart-shaped leaves,
I leave thee there in the dooryard, blooming, returning with spring.

I cease from my song for thee,
From my gaze on thee in the west, fronting the west, communing with thee,
O comrade lustrous with silver face in the night.

Yet each to keep and all, retrievements out of the night,
The song, the wondrous chant of the gray-brown bird,
And the tallying chant, the echo arous'd in my soul,
With the lustrous and drooping star with the countenance full of woe,
With the holders holding my hand nearing the call of the bird,
Comrades mine and I in the midst, and their memory ever to keep, for the
dead I loved so well,
For the sweetest, wisest soul of all my days and lands—and this for his
dear sake,
Lilac and star and bird twined with the chant of my soul,
There in the fragrant pines and the cedars dusk and dim.

II

O CAPTAIN! MY CAPTAIN!

O CAPTAIN! my Captain! our fearful trip is done,
The ship has weather'd every rack, the prize we sought is won,
The port is near, the bells I hear, the people all exulting,
While follow eyes the steady keel, the vessel grim and daring;

But O heart! heart! heart!

O the bleeding drops of red,

Where on the deck my Captain lies,

Fallen cold and dead.

O Captain! my Captain! rise up and hear the bells;
Rise up—for you the flag is flung—for you the bugle trills,
For you bouquets and ribbon'd wreaths—for you the shores a-crowding,
For you they call, the swaying mass, their eager faces turning;

Here Captain! dear father!

This arm beneath your head!

It is some dream that on the deck,

You've fallen cold and dead.

My Captain does not answer, his lips are pale and still,
My father does not feel my arm, he has no pulse nor will,
The ship is anchor'd safe and sound, its voyage closed and done,
From fearful trip the victor ship comes in with object won;

Exult O shores, and ring O bells!

But I with mournful tread,

Walk the deck my Captain lies,

Fallen cold and dead.

III

HUSH'D BE THE CAMPS TO-DAY

(May 4, 1865)

HUSH'D be the camps to-day,
And soldiers let us drape our war-worn weapons,
And each with musing soul retire to celebrate,
Our dear commander's death.

No more for him life's stormy conflicts,
Nor victory, nor defeat—no more time's dark events,
Charging like ceaseless clouds across the sky.

But sing poet in our name,
Sing of the love we bore him—because you, dweller in camps, know it
truly.

As they invault the coffin there,
Sing—as they close the doors of earth upon him—one verse,
For the heavy hearts of soldiers.

IV

THIS DUST WAS ONCE THE MAN

THIS dust was once the man,
Gentle, plain, just and resolute, under whose cautious hand,
Against the foulest crime in history known in any land or age,
Was saved the Union of these States.



BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTES



BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

I

IN early copies of the first edition that were put into cloth binding of *Walt Whitman's / Drum-taps / New York, / 1865. /* (12mo Pp. i-iv: 5-72,) the monody on Lincoln is not to be found. Later on, after the assassination, it appeared in the *Sequel to Drum-taps: / (Since the preceding came from the press.) When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd, / and other pieces. / Washington / 1865-6. /* (12mo Pp. 1-24.) The lyric "O Captain! My Captain!" is also in this *Sequel*, while "Hush'd be the Camps To-day" had already been included among the various poems that make up *Drum-taps* (P. 69). Last of all the quatrain, "This Dust was once the Man," was first printed in *Leaves of Grass, / Washington, D. C. / 1871-2. /* where the entire suite of four poems is entitled "President Lincoln's Burial Hymn." In *Leaves of Grass / Boston / 1881-2 /* this section is finally grouped as "Memories of President Lincoln." Henceforth no further changes were made either in the text or the order of the poems.

II

President Lincoln's Funeral Hymn, reprinted in love of the poet and admiration of the subject among the great poems of the language, at the Essex House Press, under the care of C. R. Ashbee, who has drawn the frontispiece and capitals. London, 1900.

This edition consisted of 135 copies only (Fcap, 8vo, Pp. 20, full vellum boards) all printed on Roman vellum, with frontispiece, initials, and pressmark, colored by hand.

III

Memories of President Lincoln and other Lyrics of the War
by Walt Whitman. Portland, Maine, 1904. 50 copies, small
quarto, (5½ x 7) printed on Japan vellum. Pp. xiv: 1-42.

IV

Memories of President Lincoln and other Lyrics of the War
by Walt Whitman. Portland, Maine, 1906. Issued in Lyric
Garland Series, (925 copies). Fcap, 8vo, grey paper boards.
Also 100 numbered copies on Japan vellum and 10 copies on
Roman vellum done up in full vellum with silk ties, numbered
and signed.

Second edition (925 copies) on hand-made paper only. 1912.



THREE HUNDRED COPIES OF THIS BOOK
PRINTED ON ITALIAN HAND-MADE PAPER
AND THE TYPE DISTRIBUTED IN THE
MONTH OF SEPTEMBER MDCCCCXII

